GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:681
ANSWERED ON:21.11.2007
EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF LOCAL-SELF GOVERNMENT
Senthil Dr. Raman

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has reviewed or assessed the functioning of local Governments during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details of such review alongwith the measures taken to strengthen the local Governments envisaged as 'Institutions of Local Governments'; and

(c) the administrative reforms needed to strengthen the panchayats and to dismantle the present 'collector raj' to bring about effective panchayati raj institutions?

Answer

MINISTER OF THER STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a): After the Ministry of Panchayati Raj was set up, a Conference of Chief Ministers and State Ministers in charge of rural development and Panchayati Raj on "Poverty Alleviation and Rural Prosperity through Panchayati Raj" was organized in New Delhi on 29-30 June 2004, jointly by the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Issues relating to effective implementation of Part IX and IX A of the Constitution on Panchayati Raj were tabled as the agenda for discussions by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. In this Conference, a decision was taken to hold seven Round Table Conferences to formulate a draft action plan towards achieving the objective of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions to enable them to emerge as institutions of self-government for the planning and implementation of programmes of economic development and social justice as envisioned in the Constitution.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened seven Round Table Meetings with the State Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj between July, 2004 and December, 2004. A set of around 150 action points was evolved by consensus and adopted unanimously at the conclusion of the last Round Table in Jaipur in December, 2004. Consultative mechanisms have been set up by the Government of India and State Governments to follow up the Round Table Conferences which comprise a Council of Ministers of Panchayati Raj under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister for Panchayati Raj and a Committee of Chief Secretaries of States and Panchayati Raj Secretaries under the Chairmanship of the Union Secretary (Panchayati Raj).

The Council of Ministers of Panchayati Raj has been convened thrice, at Kochi, Kerala in August 2005, at Bhubaneswar, Orissa in June 2006 and at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala in August 2007, respectively. The Empowered Sub-Committee of National Development Council also reviews the progress of implementation of the provision of the Constitution during its meetings, which are held periodically. Most of these action points revolve around follow up measures on activity mapping, matching transfer of funds and functionaries, creation of Panchayat sector-window in the state budget, constitution and operational guidelines for the district Planning Committees within an agreed time frame.

(b): The full details of these and associated measures may be seen the 2000−page, three− volume report in The State of the Panchayats − A Mid−term Review and Appraisal tabled in both Houses of Parliament on 23 November, 2006. The Institute of Rural Management at Anand (IRMA) has now been commissioned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to undertake an independent evaluation of the State of the Panchayats.

(c): The Panchayat Raj regime, as set out in Part IX read with Part IXA of the Constitution, and the various laws enacted thereafter by Parliament and the State Authorities provided for the devolution of functions, functionaries and finances to Panchayati Raj Institutions(PRIs), and the formation of District Planning Committees (DPCs), as well as other institutional measure, to strengthen the PRIs and make them more effective.